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An

Inaugural Dissertation

On

Cholera Infantum.

By

George T. Hutchings.

Virginia.

1825.

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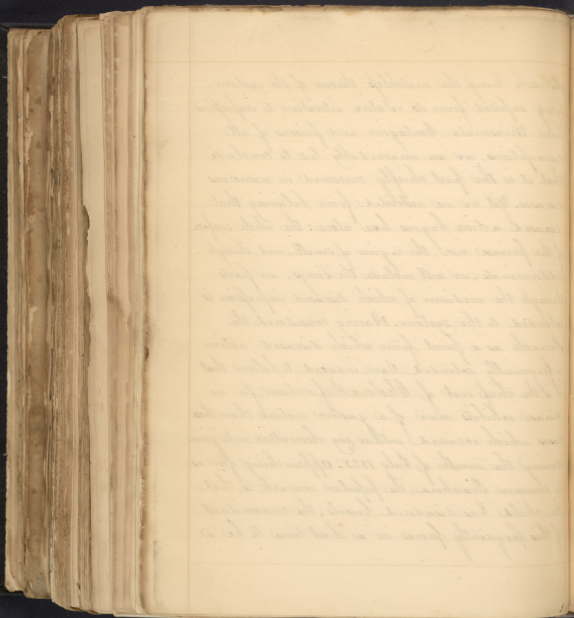
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On Cholera Infantum.

When we reflect that it has not been ordained by Divine Providence that Man shall live free from disease, that daily manifestations convince us of the sorrowful state to which affliction can reduce us, with all the solicitude and commiseration of attending relations and friends, we are naturally led to inquire, in what can man excel more than in ministering to the sick, whereby he smooths the pillow of painful confinement, and rescues from premature death, him who seeks to live yet longer? No higher trust is committed to man than the execution of those duties which devolve on him, who presumes to conduct Disease to a favourable termination. His care and attention should be commensurate with the interest felt, and prudence exercised in his own self preservation; each case should be considered as his own. It is necessary then to have some idea of the object to be combatted, or in what Disease consists. The

Stomach being the matchless throne of the system,
lying exposed from its relative situation to impressions
from Miasmata, Contagion, and poisons of all
descriptions, we are unavoidably led to conclude
that it is the part chiefly concerned in numerous
diseases. Yet we are restricted from believing that
diseased action begins here alone: the whole surface
of the primæ viæ, the region of smell, and, though
indeterminate, we will include the Lungs, are parts
through the medium of which diseased impression is
extended to the system. Having considered the
Stomach as a point from which diseased action
is frequently extended, I am induced to believe that
it is the chief seat of Cholera Infantum, for no
disease exhibits more of a gastric nature than these
cases which occurred within my observation in Virginia
during the month of July 1825. Approaching often as
a common Diarrhœa, the popular remark is, that
the child has disordered bowels, the concomitant
of this frequently proves in a short time to be a

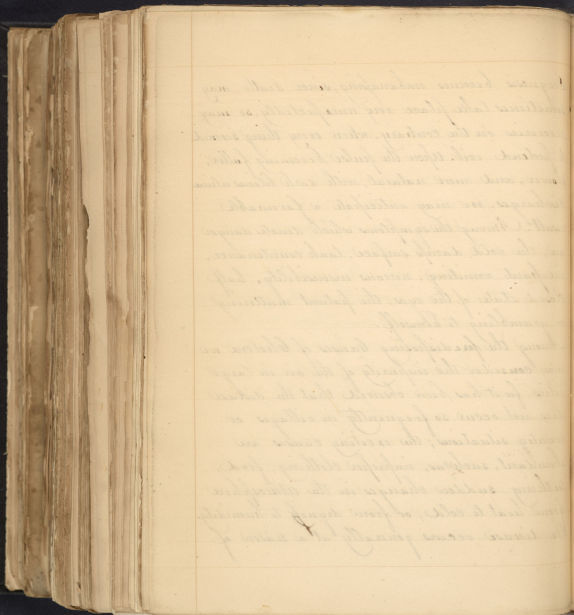


vomiting of bile, and of whatever is swallowed. This discharge of bile is in most cases preceded by retchings and efforts of the stomach, by which only a thin or watery matter is thrown off. There are exacerbations of the disease in the evening; the brain is affected as shown by delirium and frenzy; the pulse becomes small, quick, and chorded; there is intolerable thirst, shrunk and languid eyes, sharp nose, cold extremities, with great heat of the head and bowels. The smell of the discharge is somewhat peculiar, for I do not know that it occurs in many other diseases, save Dysentery; it is that of water in which meat has been washed. The skin on the forehead becomes tight, the lips shrivelled or contracted, and, at the approach of death, the belly tumid, with an increase of debility, though decrease in the severity of the symptoms. The disease may continue from three to fifteen days.

With respect to the diagnosis of Cholera it may resemble the disease arising from Scintillation. A

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Prognosis becomes embarrassing, since death may sometimes take place very unexpectedly, so may recoveries on the contrary, when every thing seemed to portend evil. When the pulse becoming fuller, slower, and more natural, with dark bilious alvine discharges, we may anticipate a favourable result. Among the symptoms which denote danger are, the cold damp surface, lank countenance, incessant vomiting, nervous insensibility, half closed state of the eyes, the patient muttering or grumbling to himself.

Among the predisposing causes of Cholera we may consider the impurity of the air in large cities, for it has been observed that the disease does not occur so frequently in villages or country situations; the exciting causes are abundant, such as, improper clothing, food, teething, sudden changes in the atmosphere from heat to cold, or from dryness to humidity. The disease occurs generally at a season of



the year when fruits are plentiful, we may then justly include the improper use of them among the sources of this very intractable disease. It is evidently of gastric origin, soon however involving the hepatic apparatus, hence an increased flow of bile.

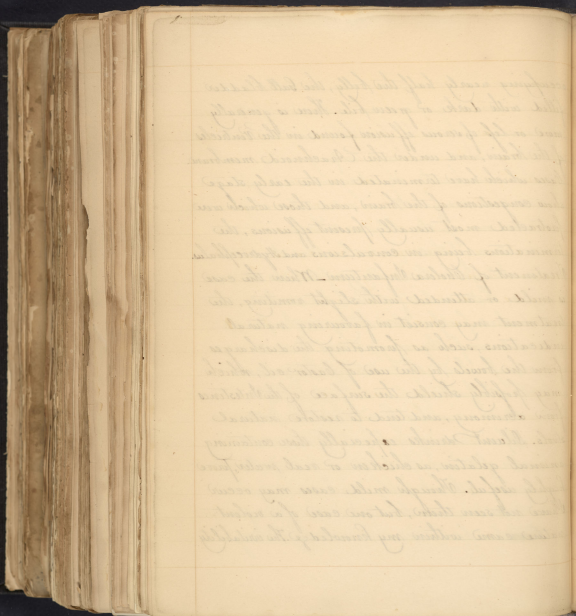
Johnson in writing on the Cholera of India, gives it as his decided opinion that it is a disease arising from a diminution, if not a total suppression of the biliary secretion. The derivation of the word Cholera implies a "flowing of bile," and Dr. Johnson strenuously maintains that this circumstance is a salutary effect, and not by any means a cause of the disease, if so he says we should observe bile amongst the first discharges from the intestines and stomach. I cannot for my part distinguish between Cholera morbus of children and Cholera Infantum. In the application of Fever, we no where meet with the terms Febris adultorum and Febris Infantum; I hence conclude that the Cholera of grown persons must be of the same nature with

the disease under consideration, as many of the most prominent symptoms are alike, and although the causes may not be precisely the same, debauches in eating and drinking too frequently make up the number. In Dysentery we are taught to believe that two functions are materially involved, the functions of the skin and Liver, and that a correction of these insures health: it seems reasonable from the analogy of the two diseases to suppose that similar functions are involved, and that checked perspiration acting on the principle of reversed sympathy may serve as a remote cause in bringing about that state of things observed in *Gleba Infantum*.

Post mortem researches have shown in protracted cases, appearances of dropsical effusions, dark Liver, and spots over the Intestines, principally the Duodenum, with extremely diminished caliber of this Intestine, and the next in the order of descent: the Liver has been discovered extremely enlarged,

occupying nearly half the belly, the Gall bladder filled with dark or green bile. There is generally more or less of serous effusion found in the Ventricle of the brain, and under the Arachnoid membrane. Cases which have terminated in the early stage show congestions of the brain, and those which were protracted most usually present effusions, the terminations being in convulsions and Hydrocephalus.

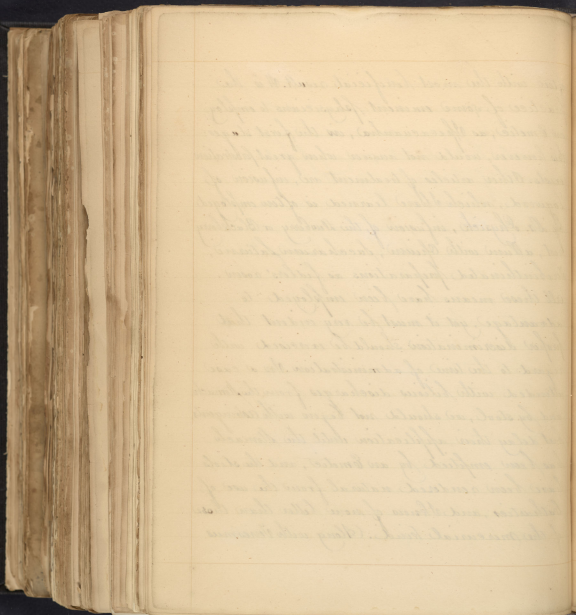
Treatment of Cholera Infantum—When the case is mild or attended with slight vomiting, the treatment may consist in favouring natural indications, such as promoting the discharges from the bowels by the use of Castor oil, which may possibly shield the surface of the Intestines from acrimony, and tend to restore natural stools. Diluent drinks especially those containing animal gelatin, as chicken or real water, prove highly useful. Though mild cases may occur I have not seen them, but one case of a violent nature came within my knowledge. The virulability



of Stomach was too great for the retention of any
 article, whether medicinal or nutritive. The vomitings
 were at times bilious, also the discharges from
 the bowels. That almost unerring peculiarity in
 the smell of the faeces was not observed in this
 case. The attention of the physician was first
 called to allay the violent and frequent efforts
 of the Stomach; in this he was baffled, for
 after an administration of the most approved
 antientic medicines, such as lime water and mild,
 strong coffee without cream or sugar, mint tea &c,
 the vomiting continued, and the case proved fatal.
 The chicken water, neutral mixture, anodyne enemata,
 warm bath and fomentations were not employed,
 for reasons, if any, which were not assigned.
 The warm bath, from its divided effects in allaying
 irritation in the system, and diverting fluids to
 the surface, is a valuable remedial means.
 Calomel and Opium in small quantities, as $\frac{1}{4}$ or
 $\frac{1}{2}$ of the former to $\frac{1}{8}$ of the latter, are employed.

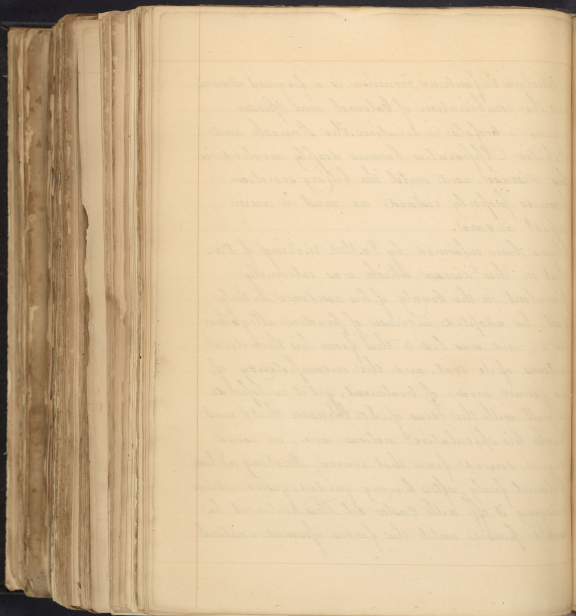
often with the most beneficial result. It is the practice of some eminent physicians to employ an Emetic, as Ipecacuanha, in the first stage; this however, would not answer when great prostration exists. Other articles of treatment are, infusion of Logwood, which I have learned is often employed by Dr. Physick, infusion of the Strawberry or Blackberry root, attenu with Opium, saccharum saturni, Serebinthinated preparations as fidlers' rosin.

All these means have been employed to advantage, yet it must be very evident that proper discrimination should be exercised with regard to the time of administration. In a case attended with bilious discharges from the stomach and by stool, we should not begin with astringents, but delay their application until the stomach has been emptied by an Emetic, and the stools have been rendered natural from the use of Cathartics, and I know of none better than those of the mercurial kind. Along with Venesectus



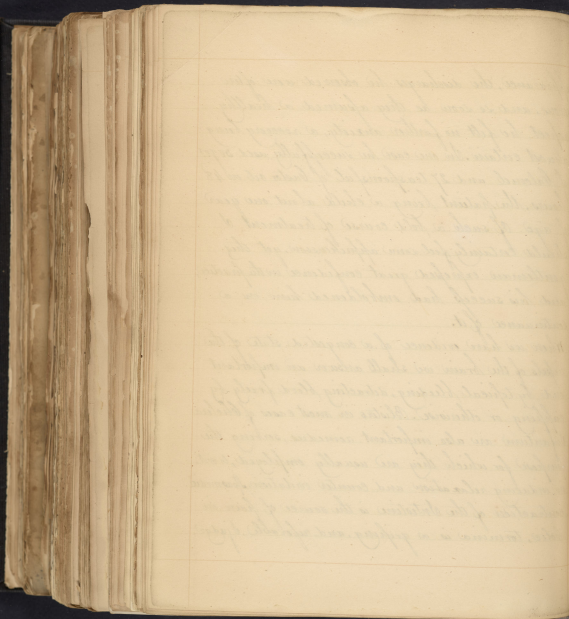
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in Cholera Infantum, Tormina is a frequent attendant;
now the combination of Calomel and Opium
answers a twofold indication. The Stomach and
Hepatic Apparatus become deeply involved in
this disease, and until the biliary secretion
becomes properly restored we must in vain
expect a cure.

I have been informed by Dr. M^r. W. King of W^a.
that in this disease which was extremely
prevalent in the County of his residence, in July
last, he adopted a course of practice altogether
bold, and was led to this from his theoretical
notions of its seat, and the incompetency of
his former mode of treatment, yet it corresponds
so well with the ideas of Dr. Johnson that I must
think his speculative notions were, in some
degree, derived from that source. Dr. King exhibited
Calomel freely, after having quieted gastric irritation,
carrying it off with castor oil. This treatment he
would pursue until the forces assumed a natural

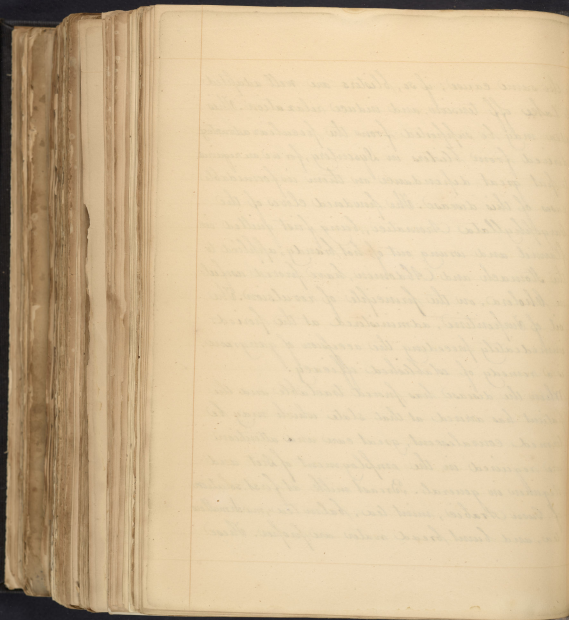


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appearance, the discharges he observed were often
serous, and so soon as they assumed a healthy
aspect, he felt no farther anxiety, a recovery being
almost certain. In one case he successfully used 30 grs
of Calomel and 27 teaspoonful of Castor oil in 48
hours, the patient being a child about one year
of age. Of such a bold course of treatment I
should certainly feel some apprehension, yet this
gentleman expressed great confidence in the practice,
and his success had emboldened him in a
continuance of it.

When we have evidence of a congested state of the
vessels of the brain we shall answer an important
end by topical bleeding, detracting blood freely by
cupping or otherwise. Blisters in most cases of Cholera
Infantum are also important remedies, serving the
purpose for which they are usually employed, to wit,
in inducing relaxation and counter irritation. Spasmodic
contraction of the Intestine is the source of pain in
Colic, tormina is a griping, and referable, I judge,

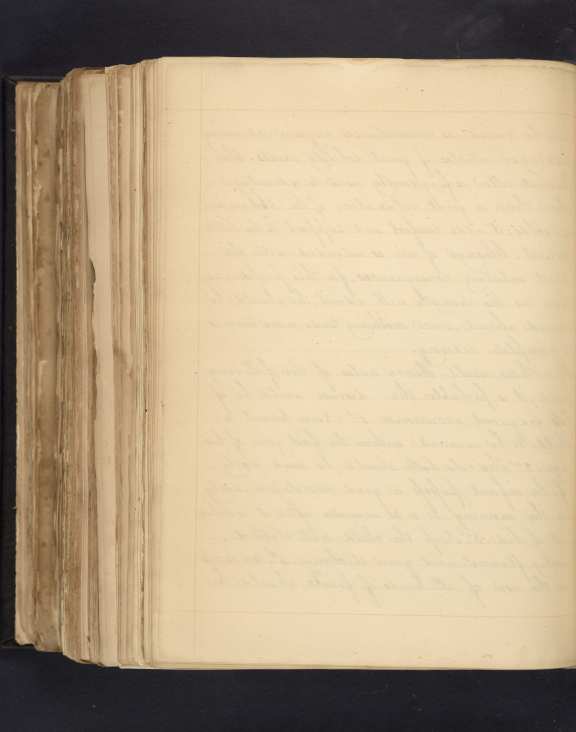


to the same cause; if so, blisters are well adapted to take off tension, and induce relaxation. This idea may be supported from the peculiar advantage derived from blisters in Dysentery, for we are required to put great dependance on them in formidable cases of this disease. The powdered cloves of the *Earyophyllata Aromatici*, being first quilted in flannel and wrung out of hot brandy, applied to the Stomach and Abdomen, have proved useful in Cholera, on the principle of revulsion. The oil of Turpentine, administered at the period immediately preceding the accession of gangrene, is a remedy of established efficacy. When the disease has proved tractable and the patient has arrived at that state which may be termed convalescent, great care and attention are required in the employment of Diet and Regimen in general. Breast milk at first, solution of Gum Arabic, mint tea, balm tea, marshmallows tea, and burnt bread water are proper. These

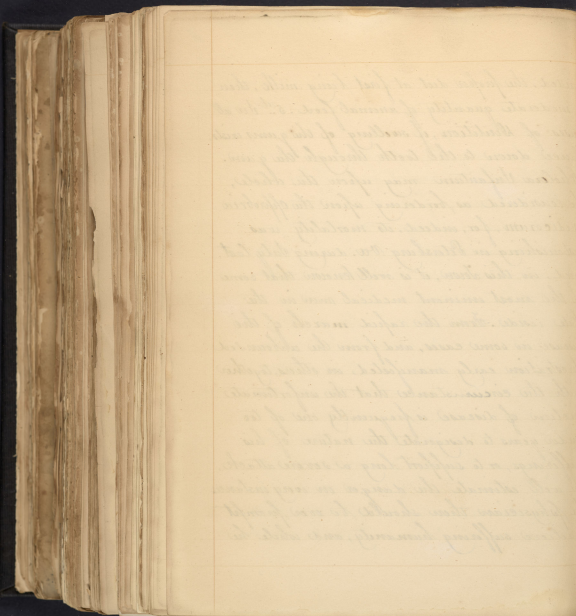


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may be varied as circumstances require, advancing to stronger articles if great debility exists. The flannel roller is frequently used to advantage when there is great relaxation of the Abdominal muscles; it adds comfort and support to the little patient. Change of air is attended with the most salutary consequences, for this purpose, as soon as his strength will admit, he should be carried abroad, since nothing tends more towards a complete recovery.

If mothers would observe rules of the following kind, it is probable the disease would be of less frequent occurrence. 1st Never permit a child to be weaned within the first year of his age. 2nd The cold bath should be used daily, if the infant possess a good constitution, early in the morning, 20 or 30 minutes after it is taken out of bed. 3rd Keep the child well clothed, using flannel and yarn stockings. 4th An excess in the use of all kinds of fruits should be



avoided, the proper diet at first being milk, then
 a moderate quantity of animal food. 5th In all
 cases of Stomatitis, if swelling of the gums exists,
 lance down to the tooth through the gum.
 Cholera Infantum may upon the whole,
 be considered as bordering upon the opprobria
 Medicorum, for, indeed, its mortality was
 astonishing in Petersburg Va. during July last,
 and, in this town, it is well known that some
 of the most eminent medical men in the
 State reside. From the rapid march of the
 disease in some cases, and from the unbounded
 prostration early manifested in others, together
 with the circumstance that the unfortunate
 victims of disease is frequently one of too
 tender years to designate the nature of his
 sufferings, or to support long a severe attack,
 we will estimate the danger in every instance.
 The physician then should be ever prompt
 to relieve suffering humanity, and while he



is quick to discern in the choice of expedients, should
acquit himself with deserved credit, remembering
that in so doing, the rewards of a higher judge
than those of ering man await him.

